

Ormiston House



Our first day trip for 2010 was to Cleveland and Ormiston House. Ormiston is a beautifully preserved colonial gentleman's residence with a spectacular view over Raby Bay. Built for Capt Louis Hope in the mid-1850s to mid-1860s, it was purchased in 1959 by the Carmelite Order of Nuns and is now operated as a museum by a dedicated group of volunteers. Capt Hope was the son of an aristocratic Scottish family, who came to Moreton Bay in 1848, settling first in Kilcoy and then moving to Raby Bay in 1853, where his first residence was a slab hut, which later became the detached kitchen for the main house. This hut still stands in good condition.

Capt Hope brought out skilled workmen from Scotland to build the main part of the house, which was constructed of bricks baked in a near-by kiln. The floors are mostly of cyprus pine (which has helped keep the termites at bay!) and the shutters, French lights, doors and fireplaces are of red cedar. Innovations unusual for the time are hot running water, a septic system and gaslights. At the same time, Capt Hope laid out the beautiful gardens with majestic bunya pines, roses, azaleas and other exotic flora collected from all over the world. In 1863 Capt Hope planted 20 acres of sugar cane and built his own mill to process the crop, thus becoming the first person to produce sugar commercially in Queensland. A dispute with a neighbour over failure to crush the neighbour's cane, due to a mechanical breakdown at the mill, cost him dearly and caused him to abandon the sugar industry and eventually to retire to England with his family in 1884. The house passed through many owners until bought by the Carmelites. Instead of tearing down the old house to build their convent on the best part of the estate, the sisters built to the side and left the charming old home intact for future generations to enjoy.

We were served with a dainty Devonshire Tea on the verandah, overlooking the Bay, followed by a guided tour of the house.

Because of uncertain weather, Valerie had decided to forego the planned picnic at Cleveland Point and instead we enjoyed a very tasty lunch at Azu on the Bay, one of the many new restaurants lining the marina. Unfortunately, this meant we didn't have time to inspect the shopping precinct, which was probably a Good Thing for our wallets. Another enjoyable and successful day, Valerie, for which we thank you.

June James